

First discovery and acquisition.

The first right of Great Britain to this as to every other Dependency in America seems to have been founded upon the original discovery by Cabot for King Henry the Seventh in 1497. Formal possession was afterwards taken by Sir Humphery Gilbert in 1583, at the Harbour of St. John's, Newfoundland, for the Territory two hundred leagues every way round it, within which circuit the whole Island of Cape Breton would be included. Between the years 1613 and 1629 the French, who are said to have previously intruded (first in 1598) into these dominions, were either subjugated or expelled.

Ceded to France, 1632

In 1632, however, Charles the first restored and ceded to France, by the Treaty of St. Germain's, "all places possessed by the English in New France, La Cadie, and Canada, "particularly Port Royal, Quebec, and Cape Breton;" and the Island of Cape Breton was immediately taken possession of by the French Government, and was never restored by Treaty till 1762. Cromwell reclaimed the whole of Nova Scotia in 1654, and in 1655 by the Treaty of Peace with France the rights of England were acknowledged by the former power.

Nova Scotia reconquered and restored to Great Britain 1655.

Patents to Sir William Alexander and La Tour.

The date of James the First's Patent to Sir William Alexander was 1622. This was confirmed by a Patent of Charles the First, dated 12th July, 1629, which re-appointed Sir W. Alexander Governor General. The Protector's Patent to Sir Charles La Tour (to whose father Sir William Alexander had sold his rights) was in 1656. This last Patent did not include Cape Breton, which however was included in the two former. The validity of all the three seems very questionable, and all appear to have been abrogated either by the purchase and surrender of the grants or by the cession and reconquest of the Country. From La Tour the property passed to Sir Thomas Temple, who was Governor and in possession till 1662; when he agreed to surrender it to King Charles the Second for a sum of £10,000. Another purchase of the seigneurie or property of all the Province seems to have been afterwards made in 1731 from the Heirs of La Tour by the Crown for 2000 Guineas.

Cession of Acadia to France, 1667.

In 1667 Acadia, without any boundaries, was again ceded to France by the Treaty of Breda.

Third cession to France, 1696.

In 1696, by the Treaty of Ryswick, the same Territory which had, on the breaking out of the War in 1689, been partly reclaimed by the English, was again ceded to France, the boundary of whose dominions was now established at the St. Croix.

Nova Scotia "with its ancient boundaries" restored to England, Cape Breton to France, 1713.

After the renewal of the War in 1701, the Peninsula of Nova Scotia having been again mostly recovered by the English (in 1710), was in 1713, by the Treaty of Utrecht, confirmed to England under the name of "Nova Scotia, or Acadia in its full extent, according to its ancient limits," "as also the Town of Port Royal, now called Annapolis Royal, and in general of all that depend on the said Counties and Islands belonging to them." By the same Treaty Cape Breton remained under the dominion of France.

Cape Breton becomes an important French Colony.

The French lost no time in planting the Island, and founding and fortifying its Capital Louisbourg, esteeming this possession as the key to dominion both by land and sea in America. In population, industry and commerce the Colony made rapid advances, and the Island of St. John's (Prince Edward), now also under the dominion of France, was as well in trade as in government, a dependency upon Cape Breton.

First Patent for the Government of Nova Scotia, 1719.

Nova Scotia was in 1719 erected into a separate Province, by Letters Patent, appointing Richard Phillips, Esqr., Governor of Placentia in Newfoundland, and Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the "Province of Nova Scotia or Acadia," without any further description of boundaries. From this time the Province of Nova Scotia, under the same general description, had a regular succession of Governors and Lieutenant-Governors, who then resided at Annapolis Royal.

Its Government first organized.

In 1720, Governor Phillips, in obedience to the Royal Instructions, formed a Council of twelve persons for the civil government of the Province, until an Assembly could be called. The Province was now divided into twelve Districts, and each chose Deputies, who administered justice among the inhabitants, almost all of French descent (in number 16,000), with an appeal to the Governor and Council.

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